

In writing history, in establishing the groundwork of our analysis, we can only look back from the present. The emphasis that we make develops from today's influences, and shapes our reading of the past.

A number of developments in the past 25 years have shaped our present moment, and ask us to reconstruct the past, to view it in a different way than it was understood 25 years ago.

among the most dramatic are:

- a. the development of what is sometimes referred to as identity politics, a reconsideration of gender, race/ethnicity, and nationality in terms of new thought and new social-political movements which have challenged previous thinking about (or ignorance of) those categories.
- b. the politicization of the art world in the 1980s, especially in conflicts of censorship and funding
- c. the continued merging of film and video art

Less dramatic, but pervasive in their effect are other factors:

- d. the playing out of certain artistic directions which seemed new and full of potential in the past and which can now be more accurately understood in retrospect, such as the Godardian counter-cinema, the structuralist-minimalist strain, and the New Narrative, as well as artistic movements closely interwoven with political developments such as feminist media, gay/lesbian/queer media, and African American cinema.
- e. the continuation of highart/low art mixing as earlier evidenced in Pop art, and camp, but continued now under the label of postmodernism.
- f. the accelerated assimilation of new fashions and developments from youth culture and marginal cultures into the mainstream not only of art theory but also applied art practice in the commercial sector. The classic case to consider there is the scavenging of the avant garde for MTV expression.